



# *The Compassionate Friends*

## *Lehigh Valley Chapter*

### **Supporting Family After a Child Dies**

Volume 38 Issue 8

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**August**

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Chapter 1562

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**Our Mission:** When a child dies, at any age, the family suffers intense pain and may feel hopeless and isolated. The Compassionate Friends provides highly personal comfort, hope, and support to every family experiencing the death of a son or a daughter, a brother or a sister, or a grandchild, and helps others better assist the grieving family.

#### **You're Invited**

**The Lehigh Valley chapter meets at Bethany Wesleyan Church, Dining Room, Cherryville, PA, the second Monday of the month at 7pm**

Our support group meetings are open to all bereaved parents, grandparents and mature siblings. Group participation is confidential and voluntary.

For information about meetings, directions to our meeting space or to be added to the meeting text reminder list call or text 484-891-0823

Note: For the safety of all attendees

- Please do not attend if you feel ill, were exposed to Covid, the Flu, or tested positive in the last 14 days

#### **Next Meeting Monday, August 12**

*Note: Meeting Cancellations will be posted on the chapter Facebook page and a text sent to all on the meeting notification text list.*

#### **To Our New Members**

Making the decision to come to your first meeting can be difficult. It can also be difficult to return for a second or third meeting, but we ask that you attend three meetings before deciding whether or not TCF will work for you. We cannot walk your grief journey for you, but we can walk beside you if you allow us to. We have no easy answers or quick fixes, but we care, share and understand. Although our circumstances may be different, we have all "been there"...we are all grieving the loss of a child and therefore we can truly say we understand. You are not alone.

#### **Telephone Friends**

Sometimes you may need to talk to someone who cares and understands between meetings. To help we maintain a list of telephone friends. During these times the following members are available to listen, share and offer what support they can.

Infant Loss - Kim Szep -	610-730-3111
Only Child - Shelly Garst -	484-241-5396
Addiction - Nancy Howe -	484-863-4324
Homicide - Ginger Renner -	610-967-5113

*To volunteer as a telephone friend contact the newsletter editor*



#### **TCF National Support Resources**

The TCF National website has over 35 private Facebook pages and a number of moderated chatrooms. To register for the FB pages or chat rooms go to [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org) and click on the find support tab and then choose online communities.

## Newsletter Notes

**This Newsletter** comes to you courtesy of The Compassionate Friends, Lehigh Valley Chapter. We hope that it will be of some comfort to you on your grief journey.

### We welcome original stories and poetry

All submissions must include the author's name and your contact information. Send to the newsletter editor

**If you move** please contact the Newsletter Editor with your new address

### Newsletter Editor Contact

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## Choice Points in Your Grief

We have always had choices in our lives:

- *Should I smile or cry now?*
- *Which thumb to suck?*
- *Which shoe to lose?*
- *Who will be my best friend?*
- *Who will be my second best friend?*
- *Which to eat first . . . dessert or vegetable?*
- *Which one to fall in love with?*
- *Whom to marry?*
- *How many children to have?*
- *What will we name them?*



And then, one day, we ran out of choices, or so we thought. Our world came to pieces, and the sky grew dark, and the sun went out. But even then, in the darkest moments that we have ever known, there were choices to be made. . . even if we did not recognize them. From the moment we learned of *the* death, there were choices to be made:

- *Should I continue breathing?*
- *Who needs to be notified?*
- *Which funeral home to use?*
- *Burial or cremation?*
- *Which clothes, music, readings?*
- *Who will do what?*
- *Should I continue breathing?*

In a world where there are *no* choices to be made, we are faced with countless choices that are required. Yet there is simply no energy, no brainpower, no motivation to make any of them. We would prefer to lie down and *die*. . . and some of us tried, but it didn't work, and so we got up, dusted ourselves off; got busy, made coffee, tossed in a load of laundry, and began to move forward into grief. . . a world filled with choices we did *not* want to make!

In the early hours, days, weeks, and even months of grief, our choices are pretty basic and limited. We plod through the fog, frozen as icicles or Popsicles, functioning, but not feeling. It is early grief, and fortunately the choices are pretty basic:

- *Should I eat?*
- *Should I go to work?*
- *Should I pay the bills?*
- *Should I keep breathing?*

But as grief progresses, our choices begin to become more complex:

- *What should we do with the stuff?*
- *What do we do with the room?*
- *Should I keep breathing?*

# Our Children Remembered

Please keep the parents, grandparents and siblings of the following children in your thoughts and hearts

## Birthdays and Anniversaries

	Birth	Anniv.
<b>Christopher Crouthamel, Jr</b> - Son of Carla Monteverde ; Son of Carla Monteverde; Brother of Leah, Stephen & Carli	Aug 10	Dec 28
<b>Hope Davidson</b> - Daughter of Dean and Donna Davidson; Sister of Nicholas Davidson	Aug 8	Feb 8
<b>Jillian Faustner</b> - Daughter of Joan Cottone; Sister of Jennifer, Jessica & James	Aug 7	Oct 21
<b>Brenda Fehr Hatrak</b> - Daughter of David & Eileen Fehr, Sr.; Sister of Barbara R. Burgin and David A. Fehr, Jr.; Granddaughter of Elwood & Mary Mann and Warren and Rose Fehr	Aug 31	Jan 8
<b>Eric Graver</b> - Son of Mary L Graver	Aug 17	Jul 9
<b>Matt Kush</b> - Son of Rick and Ann Kush; Brother of Mike and Jenn	Aug 24	Feb 10
<b>Michael Leh</b> - Son of Jeneane Leh; Brother of Dayna & Samantha Leh	Nov 11	Aug 19
<b>Joseph Lestishock</b> - Son of Marjorie Lestishock	Aug 30	Nov 2
<b>Carter Mayer</b> - Son of Ashley Mowrey	Jul 13	Aug 20
<b>Benjamin Miller</b> - Son of Brian and Caitlin Miller	Aug 5	Jan 11
<b>Jim Minter</b> - Brother of Jeanine Minter	Aug 15	Mar 14
<b>PJ Pfenning</b> - Son of Maureen Pfenning; Brother of Amanda Sciarillo & Lauren Pfenning	Aug 30	Nov 5
<b>James Ralls</b> - Son of Tina Ralls; Brother of Timothy & Geoffrey	Jan 2	Aug 17
<b>Jason Rute</b> - Son of Linda Cavanaugh	Aug 25	Nov 13
<b>Lauren Schneck</b> - Daughter of James and Lisa Schneck	Aug 10	Dec 2
<b>Elliot Senseman</b> - Son of Heather Lyons	Aug 17	Jul 27
<b>Anthony Sisonick</b> - Son of Rella Sisonick Daniels; Brother of Nicholas Sisonick	Nov 8	Aug 27
<b>Jonelle Sisonick</b> - Daughter of Rella Sisonick Daniels; Sister of Nicholas Sisonick	May 22	Aug 3
<b>Benjamin Steinert</b> - Son of MaryAnne Steinert	Aug 1	Apr 9
<b>Zackary Stokes</b> - Son of Pam and Duane Stokes	Aug 8	Jul 2
<b>Michael Szabo</b> - Son of John and Maria Szabo, Jr	Aug 2	Aug 17
<b>David Uecker</b> - Son of Susan Uecker-Bittner & The Late Phillip C. Uecker; Brother of Amanda Uecker-Miernicki	Aug 2	Oct 3
<b>Kade Veltri</b> - Son of Kerianne Veltri	Feb 5	Aug 26
<b>Jonathan Weiss</b> - Brother of Ginger Renner	Aug 20	Jan 22
<b>Christina Williamson</b> - Daughter of Chris and Kim Williamson; Sister of the late Christopher Jayden Williamson		Aug 6
<b>Adam Wolk</b> - Son of Michael and Sheila Wolk; Brother of Laura & Sarah Wolk	Aug 1	Oct 22
<b>Hunter Yeagle</b> - Son of Terree and Brett Oakwood	Aug 1	Sep 6
<b>Craig Yurick</b> - Son of Robert and Sharon Yurick; Brother of Todd Yurick	Aug 5	Jun 21



## Love Gifts



Love Gifts enable us to reach out to newly bereaved and provide ongoing support to all members. They may be given in memory of a child or in memory or in honor of a friend or relative. Gifts are tax deductible.

Contributor

Loved One



*No Love Gifts this month*

## Donations & Contributions

- ★ **Bethany Wesleyan Church, Cherryville, PA**  
*For our meeting space*
- ★ **Giant Food Store Employees United Way Contributions**  
*In Memory of David Todd Smith*

- ★ **Aetna Payroll Contributors**
- ★ **United Way Payroll Contributors**
- ★ **The Matt Kush Foundation**  
*In Memory of Matt Kush*

Continued from page 2

- *Should we move, stay married, hide?*
- *What do we tell everyone when they ask how we are?*
- *Why are we still breathing?*

Eventually grief settles down into a routine of sorts . . . a new normal for us; and still there are choices to be made:

- *Should we go to a support group?*
- *Should I make him/her go with me?*
- *How should we memorialize our child, grandchild?*
- *How long should we be grieving?*
- *Can we move on, get over it, or stay in sadness forever?*

And finally, what should we bring with us into our new life?

- *Bitterness?*
- *Sadness?*
- *Guilt?*
- *Joy?*
- *Hate?*
- *Sorrow?*
- *Pain first?*
- *Pain always?*

You will wrestle long and hard, and finally discover the awful truth of grief. your child, your grandchild, your sibling, has *died*. You have *not*. You are left among the living, to carve out an existence that has to endure not only the pains of life, but the joys as well. And suddenly, survival isn't enough. If you are to be stuck in life, then you can choose to *live* again.

We can choose how we wish grief to influence us. We can carry bitterness and anger, or we can choose to remember the light and the love. We rearrange the furniture, change rooms, and sometimes we move. "The Room" becomes a den, a sewing room, a guest room, or perhaps someone else's room. We slowly begin to understand that putting our child's things away does not mean putting him or her out of our life.

This now becomes a fork in the road . . . a choice point between grieving forever and learning to live with what you've got instead of what you wanted. You don't have to remember only the awfulness of *the death*. You can choose to recall the joys, the light your loved one brought, the music of his or her presence in your life:

These are the *Choice Points in Grief*

- ✓ You can choose what you remember.

- ✓ You can choose what you carry with you.
- ✓ You can choose what you let go.
- ✓ You can choose to carry hurt, pain, bitterness, and anger.
- ✓ You can choose to carry joy, love, laughter, and life.
- ✓ How long are you going to let *the death* overshadow *the life*?
- ✓ Didn't say good-bye? Then say it now, or choose to say, "I love you," now, tonight, and forever.
- ✓ You don't stop loving someone just because they died.
- ✓ You can choose whether you remember the death or the life first.

You can look for joy and carry rose-colored glasses, or you can carry the pain and sorrow of the death. Risk it all; don't wait for anything anymore . . . just start dancing. Even if there is no light, our memory can light the way. Can take our memories away. And toss them away or give them away, but no one can destroy those precious moments of light. They will last forever.

*Love is the size of a sigh*

*Light as a kiss*

*Gentle as a whisper*

*Small as a moment in time*

I'm glad I bought the ticket. I'm glad I paid the price. I am glad I shared the journey and have a memento or two from the ride. Let go of the hurt so there is room for love to grow. For the life, not just the death.

I think the truly bereaved are those who have never known love at all. You and I are rich beyond measure because someone loved us and we loved them. . . we still do part. And for this I am thankful.

*Grief isn't a seasonal song.*

*It's a Lifetime song,*

*but it doesn't have to be a sad song forever.*

*Our loved ones lived. We loved them.*

*We still do.*

*I choose joy and thanks for the little while*

*By Darcie Sims; PhD, CHT, CT, GMS*

*Originally published in We Need Not Walk Alone, The Compassionate Friends Magazine, Summer 2012 Issue*

## Where Are You?

I missed you yesterday  
and looked for you  
among the artifacts of your life,  
your room with pictures,  
the clothes that still carried your scent,  
your favorite tools and books,  
the music you loved to hear.

The very walls echoed your vitality  
and carried faint memories of riotous laughter.  
And so I sat there, comforted for a while,  
but forced at last to confess  
that although beautiful memories lingered  
you were not there,  
not then and not ever again.

If I could not find you yesterday,  
where, then, can I look today?  
Who can I talk to, implore, beg  
to show me the way?  
Where are the hidden doorways  
to the signs and wonders  
others claim to see?

My musings bring no answers  
so I take a walk to clear my mind.  
Ahead, I see children playing,  
and their laughter floating on the wind  
reminds me of your own carefree approach to life.  
Their running mirrors your own abandon  
and the way you always found joy in simple things.

Can this be the answer  
to the riddle of finding you again?  
Can it be that I will hear you  
in every moment of laughter?  
That I will see you  
in the actions of a mischievous friend,  
that I will feel you in every touch of compassion?

I've always heard  
that if you seek, you will find.  
Perhaps the corollary to that  
is that you must seek in the right places.  
I've been looking in the scrapbook  
of all that used to be  
and found only momentary solace.

So let me look for you anew  
In all the wonders and blessings of life.  
I believe you are reflected there  
With Every expression of happiness and joy,  
in every instance of fearless exploration and with  
every act of unconditional love.

*By Harold Hopkins January, 2001  
In loving memory of Lance Peter Hopkins 1975 -1999*

## Are You a Grief Victim or Grief Survivor?

*Being a victim is a state of mind dictated by others. A survivor dictates their own state of mind.*

**A victim** knows about feeling down and tries to stay up.  
**A survivor** knows feeling down is okay.

**A victim** tries hard to hide the tears.  
**A survivor** never leaves home without Kleenex.

**A victim** struggles to maintain a state of normalcy.  
**A survivor** knows normal no longer exists.

**A victim** gets caught in isolation.  
**A survivor** reaches out when they need to.

**A victim** is afraid they in time will forget.  
**A survivor** knows they never will!

**A victim** sometimes feels guilty laughing.  
**A survivor** laughs through their tears.

**A victim** tries at times to block out the memories.  
**A survivor** embraces memories of all kinds.

**A victim** wants someone to cure their grief.  
**A survivor** just wants someone to share their journey.

**A victim** struggles to get over their grief.  
**A survivor** fights to get through it.

**A victim** tries to get on with their life.  
**A survivor** lives their life knowing nothing will ever  
be the same.

**A victim** says oh I'm okay...than secretly cries.  
**A survivor** cries.., and says I'm okay.

*Author Unknown*

## Family Ties

Every time a new person is added to the family by birth, marriage, adoption, etc., everyone begins to readjust and reorganize to new roles they must assume. Husband and wife work out the give and take necessary to establish a family system. Mothers and fathers find new roles when children enter the picture, and adjust their sleeping, eating, loving, working and being. Brothers and sisters truly learn what sharing and change are all about when a new member is added.

Everyone, in fact, becomes a changed individual in this new system. New patterns of trusting and communicating are established. Like the mobile we hang above the crib, the family works toward establishing stability; each part balances the whole.

The family mobile is susceptible to many forces of change; winds from outside and within. But blown and disturbed, each piece moves and sways until eventually the mobile becomes stabilized once again.

When one of the parts is suddenly removed, as in the death of a child, the very core is threatened. Cut off one of the parts of the mobile and it becomes frenzied, looking for stability and lost balance. It sways to and fro, bobbing and weaving, tilting up and down.

When our child dies, we are inevitably faced with this chaos in the system. How can we seek to balance our ship of life when we, as a part of that system, feel pain, confusion and imbalance? If we were the anchor before, we find ourselves adrift, unable to hold in the current. If we were the steering wheel, we begin to spin uncontrollably. The propeller shaft is bent; the spare oar is missing; there aren't enough life preservers to go around. How do you save the ship - the mobile - the family?

- ▶ Recognize the part you as an individual play in the family and work at resolving your own losses.
- ▶ Encourage the expressing of feelings in yourself and others. Know that each person grieves in his own way and at his own pace, and give them permission to do so.
- ▶ Understand that sometimes a system cannot rebalance without professional help, and seek this help if needed.
- ▶ Watch for obsessive behavior in your family, i.e. overprotectiveness, overeating, undereating, alcohol and or drug abuse, rage and violence, etc., and offer support, sharing and help for the pain - not the behaviors.

How tragic it is when the ultimate loss, the death of a child, leads to an even greater loss; the breakdown of the family, the marriage, the individual. You, as part of the family, can work to make sure this doesn't happen.

~ Neenan, TCF Wisconsin

### GRIEF IS LIKE A RIVER

My grief is like a river,  
I have to let it flow,  
but I myself determine  
just where the banks will go.

Some days the current takes me  
in waves of guilt and pain,  
but there are always quiet pools  
where I can rest again.

I crash on rocks of anger;  
my faith seems faint indeed,  
but there are other swimmers  
who know that what I need

Are loving hands to hold me  
when the waters are too swift,  
and someone kind to listen  
when I just seem to drift.

Griefs river is a process  
of relinquishing the past.  
By swimming in hope's channels,  
I'll reach the shore at last.

Cynthia G. Kelley, [www.goodgriefresources.com](http://www.goodgriefresources.com)

In Remembering our children,  
In sharing with each other...  
We ease our pain, we share each step,  
We help smooth the road,  
And we serve as witnesses to the fact that  
We can make it beyond grief  
As we support each other.

Roy Peterson, TCF, Lexington, KY

# Sibling Page



## Twin Rainbows

Yesterday, I saw a glorious sight, a true vision of nature. I saw a double rainbow. The first rainbow, closest to earth, was very bright, colors clearly defined. The second rainbow, the one closer to heaven, was misty and loosely formed.

My dear brother, I thought of you. You represented the second rainbow. You were sent down to show me your presence, to show your closeness to me. I was told in a dream that you are never far away from me.

My life has changed. I have had to redefine and challenge myself to make strong my weakness, because you always "took up the slack" for me. You always did for me what I could not do for myself.

This past year, one of our friends finally let go of his sorrow. He was able to talk and hug me, without breaking down or weeping over the memories of us. It has been difficult for our friends and family to separate you and me. They still say our names together. They have commented: "Where you see one, you'll soon see the other."

It has been hard for me to help all of these folks to heal; to let them know that they can still love me. I am the same person, but without you. At times, it has seemed an overwhelming task, but I can only try and be the friend that you taught me to be. Then, maybe, they'll see you are still here. All that you are - your spirit, love, and friendship - live through me.

*Love, your sister,  
Meria Rae Martin, Swinomish, WA*

***Look for the rainbow  
That gracious thing, made  
up of tears and light.***

*Samuel Taylor Coleridge*

## The Unfinished Path

When we were young,  
under your wing I was kept.  
As I grew older,  
on your shoulder I wept.

With a problem I could come to you,  
day or night.  
Just knowing your answers  
would always be right.

You joined the Marines  
and "*Semper Fidelis*" you barked.  
I could see right then  
my path was marked.

It was a path to perfection  
or so I thought.  
To be like you  
is what I sought.

Since your prints have ended,  
I don't know where to go.  
I've asked Mom and Dad,  
but they don't quite know.

So I ask your advice just one more time.  
Because your prints have ended,  
The rest must be mine.

*Tim Maloney, USMC, TCF Hingham, MA*

*The Compassionate Friends hosts a chatroom and a facebook page just for bereaved siblings*

*To join go to  
[www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org) and  
click on the "Find Support" menu.  
There you will find options for  
moderated chatrooms and private  
facebook pages and information on  
how to join.*



# The Compassionate Friends Credo Copyright © 2007

**W**e need not walk alone. We are The Compassionate Friends. We reach out to each other with love, with understanding, and with hope. The children we mourn have died at all ages and from many different causes, but our love for them unites us. Your pain becomes my pain, just as your hope becomes my hope. We come together from all walks of life, from many different circumstances. We are a unique family because we represent many races, creeds, and relationships. We are young, and we are old. Some of us are far along in our grief, but others still feel a grief so fresh and so intensely painful that they feel helpless and see no hope. Some of us have found our faith to be a source of strength, while some of us are struggling to find answers. Some of us are angry, filled with guilt or in deep depression, while others radiate an inner peace. But whatever pain we bring to this gathering of The Compassionate Friends, it is pain we will share, just as we share with each other our love for the children who have died. We are all seeking and struggling to build a future for ourselves, but we are committed to building a future together. We reach out to each other in love to share the pain as well as the joy, share the anger as well as the peace, share the faith as well as the doubts, and help each other to grieve as well as to grow.

*We Need Not Walk Alone. We Are The Compassionate Friends.*

## Other Local TCF Chapters & Support Groups

**TCF Carbon County** - 484-719-6753

**TCF Easton** - 610-515-3526

**TCF Quakertown** - 267-379-0429

**GRASP** (grief recovery after substance passing)

**TCF Pocono** - 570 - 350 - 6695

(484) 788-9440

### Love Gift Form

*Your love gift will help defray the cost of chapter expenses such as the newsletter mailings, meetings and our outreach to the newly bereaved. The Compassionate Friends is a 501c(3) non-profit organization and your donations are fully tax deductible.*

Deadlines are the 1st of the month previous to the month you wish publication in. Example the deadline for publication in January is December the 1st

Contributor Name *(this will be the name that appears in the newsletter)*

Mail Love Gifts to:

Address

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS, LEHIGH VALLEY  
C/O BRENDA SOLDERITCH  
415 S. HOKENDAUQUA DR  
NORTHAMPTON, PA 18067

Phone

Email Address

I would like to make a donation of \_\_\_\_\_  In Memory of  In Honor of  A Chapter Gift *(without memorial or honorarium)*

Name of person gift given for

**Edition to be published in.** *Deadlines listed above. Late submissions or those that do not indicate an edition will be published in the next edition.*

**Special Text - Brief Messages Please.** *Poems & story submissions are always welcome and should be sent directly to the Newsletter Editor for inclusion in the newsletter.*

Please designate which of the following your gift is for ( you may circle more than one )

Newsletter Expenses

Postage

Office Expenses

Outreach Program

Special Events